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Colgate, William

The first book printed in
Canada.



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A Merry Christmas
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THE FIRST BOOK PRINTED IN CANADA

By William Colgate

The Old Rectory, Weston

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15.1.48

MUCH mystery surrounds the publication of the first Canadian book printed by Brown and Gilmore at Quebec in 1765. Known, when known at all, as the *Presentments of the Grand Jury*, it cost the foreman of the jury, a local merchant named James Johnston, the sum of "£3 Halifax [currency] for the first 150, and 10/ for each 150 after, for each sheet." The printed sheets, as was the custom of the time, were usually though not always delivered to the buyer for binding. The total number of copies printed was 450, or what is described as "4½ Sheets in Quarto." So runs the record in the Public Archives of Canada, which has in its collection of early imprints the daybook or journal of the printers. Though the written entry mentions the number of books printed, by whom they were ordered, and that the impressions were in both languages, French and English, it says nothing of the exact size of the book or of the number of pages it contained. Even so assiduous a student of early printing in Canada as Aegidius Fauteux owns to a lack of precise knowledge of the book and its contents, for he describes it incorrectly (*Introduction to Printing in Canada*, 730) as "an English brochure of about fifteen pages, the *Presentments to the Grand Juries*."

Obviously there was room for error. "No one except Dr Hubert Neilson [grandson of John Neilson], who affirmed that he had it in his possession," Dr Fauteux goes on to say, "has ever seen a copy of the *Presentment*, and for some reason it is supposed by some people to be a myth; but we do not believe that any one who has had the advantage of examining the papers of Brown and Gilmore could doubt its existence." Beyond this point apparently, his acquaintance with the *Presentments* did not go. Yet, by the simple expedient of folding stock sheets of paper to quarter size, he could easily have ascertained that the book consisted not of fifteen but of thirty-six pages, of which, as I have found, sixteen pages were printed in English and nineteen in French, with the verso of page nineteen blank. To resolve whatever doubt remains on this and other points, the entry as it appears in the daybook is here quoted in full:

(Neilson Papers)

Quebec, March 29th, 1765.

Printed for James Johnston, the Grand Jury's Presentments, Justices' Strictures, and G. Jury's Remarks thereon, 4½ Sheets In Quarto, French and English, 450 copies £3 Halifax [currency] for the 1st 150, and 10/ for each 150 after, of each Sheet.....	21.12
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If Fauteux erred so also did Lawrence C. Wroth when he asserted as he did in *Peddie's Printing: A short history* (1927: pp. 70-1) that "the earliest book . . . was probably that one in the language of the predominant nation, entitled *Presentment of the Grand Juries*. Again, in a

treatise dealing with early printing in Canada (1935), Miss Marie Tremaine mentions the brochure as containing about thirty-three pages, and adds "Of four hundred and fifty copies printed, not one is known to survive." To her later and still unpublished findings, generously imparted, I am indebted for much information about the book, and particularly of those sections still in existence. For so far as I can ascertain no complete copy of the *Presentments* is to be found in any collection public or private. In my search I applied successively to the librarian of Osgoode Hall, Toronto, of the University of Toronto, of the Bibliotheque Saint-Sulpice, of the Public Archives of Canada, and of McGill University, all of whom regretted without exception the absence of the elusive volume from their racks. Doubt was expressed in more than one instance that a French version of the piece existed or ever did exist. Most obligingly Dr G. R. Lomer of McGill went so far as to apply on my behalf to the librarian of the Phileas Gagnon collection of the Montreal Civic Library and to Mr. Malchelosse of the Saint-Sulpicians, but without result other than a polite intimation that the book was not to be had. Mr. Malchelosse further confessed that not only was he not aware of a French text, but was extremely "doubtful of the existence of the English brochure."

Gagnon in his *Essai de Bibliographie Canadienne* says nothing of the *Presentments*; nor for that matter does Garneau. Nor is there evidence to show that Francis Audet, biographer of William Brown (R.S.C., 1932), was aware of any existing copy though he was cognizant of the pertinent details surrounding its production. His obvious dependence upon Fauteux as an authoritative source probably disinclined him for further inquiry. But at that his knowledge of the book was more precise and advanced than anything on the subject which had hitherto appeared. Subsequently I learned of a copy of the English section in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society and another in that of the Yale University. Of the French section I know of only one copy, and that logically enough is in the possession of Laval University. The Public Reference Library of Toronto has a photostat copy of the English section of the *Presentments*, McGill University (Redpath Library) a photostat copy of the French section, and I myself, thanks to the courtesy of the institutions here mentioned, have a photostat copy of both the French and English sections, or the document complete.

Although commonly referred to as the *Presentments of the Grand Jury*, the book which carries no title-page proper, only a caption title, is officially designated as "*Presentments of October Sessions, made at a Continuation thereof by Adjournment, held at the Session-house in the City of Quebec, 16th October, 1764, by the GRAND-JURY, in*

Quebec. March 29th. 1765.

	£	18	0
	"	3	9
	2	5	0
	"	14	0
	2	0	0
	"	15	0
	"	9	0
Printed for James Johnston, The Grand Jury's Presentments, Judices & Vinctures, and C. Jury's Remarks Thereon, 4 th Sheet in Quarto, French & English. 1050 Copies, at 3 Reals for the 1 st 250, and 10p. for each 100 after, of each Sheet.	21	12	0
	"	1	7
	1	15	7 ¹ / ₄
	3	0	8
Paid Tho: Gilmore for 4 Weeks Board	1	11	2
Paid W ^m Brown for 4 Weeks Board	1	11	2
Paid Thomas Gilmore on Aet in this Month	17	5	4

Entries from the daybook [Memorial A] of Brown and Gilmore, describing the Presentments in detail, and showing the price paid by the foreman of the grand jury, James Johnston, a merchant of Quebec. At the foot of the page is recorded the amounts paid by the partners for board. These afford an interesting contrast with present-day prices for similar accommodation.

A T
THE FIRST COURT OF
QUARTER-SESSIONS
Of the P E A C E,

HELD AT QU'EBEC, IN October 1764.

His Worship the President's Charge to the GRAND-JURY:

GENTLEMEN of the Grand-Jury.

YOU, as the Body selected on this Occasion, for the District of the City of Quebec, are to enquire of whatever Things arise within the said District. You are to enquire of all Felonies, Trespases, Forestallings, Regratings, Infringings and Extortions of every Sort whatsoever, and all and singular of other Crimes and Offences, Misdemeanours, or Pleas of the Crown, which may be given you in Charge, or which you may know of your own Knowledge, and to make true Presentments to us His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, for the said District, in Order that they may be punished according to the several Laws, as in such Cases may be provided.

You are also to present all Things that are publick Nuisances, of every Sort which are given you in Charge, or that you may know of from your own Knowledge, in order that the same may be redressed: And also of all Incroachments or Stoppages on the several High-ways, Streets, or publick Roads, and also of what Roads are proper for Repair, and are so impassable as to endanger the Lives of His Majesty's Subjects.

You are also to make Presentment of all Vagabonds, and Persons of no visible Way of Livelihood, whereby His Majesty's Subjects may be endangered in their Lives and Property, so that such Persons may be brought to condign Punishment.

1 p^{ar}

The Presentments apparently was bound with neither cover nor title-page; only the above caption-title was employed.

[2]

Upon any Indictment which may be sent up to you upon any Offence, you must either return it a true Bill, or reject it; for you cannot find it a true Bill on one Part, and a false Bill in another Part: By your Oath you are sworn to "Deligently enquire, and true Presentment make of all Things, which shall be given you in Charge, and that you shall keep the Secrets of His Majesty, your Brother Jurors, and your own; and that you shall present no one thro' "Malice, Envy, or Hatred; neither shall you leave one un-presented for any "Reward, Favour or Affection:" By which the utmost Latitude is given to you for the redressing of Grievances of whatever Kind or Nature, without the least Room for Reflection, from any Person who may think themselves aggrieved by your Conduct; so that if you act consonant to your own Consciences, and agreeable to the Evidence that shall be laid before you, or may come within your own Knowledge, you will fully discharge the Duty of your Office.

There is one Thing I must observe to you Gentlemen, That in any Case that may come, or may be laid before you, you must not attend to any Evidence but on Behalf of the Crown.

We are but an Infant Colony, I would beg leave to recommend it to your Considerations, by every Means in your Power, to discourage any Advances towards the Disturbance of the Publick or Individuals, either by personal Inveective or general Calumny, either reduced to writing, or verbal, as the promoting of such Things serves for no other Purpose than to weaken the Community, and to render us contemptible in the Eyes of our so lately acquired fellow Subjects.

We have ordered the Clerk of the Peace to lay before you all Matters proper for your Cognizance, and we make no Manner of Doubt but you will acquit yourselves in every Matter which will be laid before you, with that Integrity and Disinterestedness which are the Characteristics of honest Men and good Subjects.

PRESENTMENTS of October Sessions, made at a Continuation thereof by Adjournment, held at the Session-house in the City of Quebec, 16th October, 1764, by the GRAND-JURY, in and for the said District.

THE great Number of inferior Courts, established in this Province, with an Intention to administer Justice, are tiresome, litigious, and expensive to this poor Colony, as they very often must be attended with the disagreeable Necessity of Appeals, and of Course of many exorbitant Fees.

The great Number appointed Justices of the Peace, out of so few Men of Character, legally qualified, and fit to be trusted with the Liberty and Property

The formal title of the Presentments is shown here. The shorter form commonly used reads, *The Presentments of the Grand Jury.*

Nous ne doutons point que vos représentations ne trouvent la réception et qu'elles n'opèrent la réformation qu'elles méritent: Si il arrive autrement, nous prions qu'il nous soit permis de vous assurer, que nous regarderons comme ennemis de la prospérité de cette colonie naissante, tous ceux qui s'opposeront à des mesures si salutaires, et que nous agirons, dans toutes les occasions convenables, avec alacrité et de concert avec les Grands Jurés (qui sont jusques ici le seul corps représentant le peuple de ce district) pour remédier à ces griefs auxquels on se plaint à présent, ou à ceux qui pourroient ci-après devenir des objets de considération.

Si vous avez manqué en ce qui regarde la formalité, ou si vous avez passé outre les règles que les Grands Jurés ont coutume d'observer dans notre Mere Patrie (ce qui ne paroît pas eu égard à la nature de votre charge) le manque d'Assemblée Générale dans cette province excuse suffisamment votre conduite aux yeux du Public. Nous sommes avec le plus grand estime et la plus grande considération,

MESSIEURS,

Vos très obligez et très obéissans Serviteurs,

William Mackenzie, William Brymer, Eleazar Levy, John Ord, Jacob Rowe, Wm Conyngham, J. Shepherd, George Allsopp, Charles Grant, Marcus Whitry, Peter Fargues, Perrar, Stephen Badly, William Holland, Calvin Gay, James Clark Minot, John A. Gassineau, Simon Fraser, John Paterfon, Thomas Venture, William Govett, John Franks, Ak. Bondfield, Chartier, Fremont, James Flanagan, Jean Bernard, John Bondfield, John Whatmough, Pelissier, B. Comte, Liard, fils, Giniée, L. D. Dunier, George Gregory, Lauchlin Smith, Rottot, James Hanna, Henry Taylor, John Engelke, Donohue, Isaac Levy, Zacharie Macaulay, William Abbott, John Puris, John Renaud.

À QU'EBEC, le 22 de Octobre, 1764.

Concluding page from the French section of the *Presentments*. The names of a number of jurymen are as familiar to Canadians now as they presumably were then.

and for the said District." Included also were "the Strictures of the Justices and the Grand Jury's reply thereto."

For the composition of both sections Caslon, pica roman and italic and small capitals, were used. In this way emphasis and pleasing variety were attained and the monotony of an unrelieved solid type page avoided. Initials, sparingly employed, were two lines in depth, except a solitary ornamental initial, formed of a Caslon letter framed with border flowers, five lines deep. Folio numbers appear at the top of the page, in the middle rather than at the side, and were set within brackets widely spaced; the purpose evidently being to make a decoration of a utility. The page margins are not wide, though doubtless adequate, especially if the reader chose to refrain from marginal comment. In such a provocative piece of writing, however, as it proved to be, such self-denial must have called for a strong effort of will.

Certainly few pieces of early printing can have aroused then and since such a storm of bitter acrimony, racial animosity and rabid hostility as did the first public appearance of the *Presentments*. And the Canadian historian, by his angry animadversions has done his best to keep interest in the subject alive. Kingsford (vol. vii, 3) condemns roundly "the unwarrantable presentment of the grand jury . . . which declared that that body alone represented the province, and that it had the right to be consulted before any ordinance passed into law; likewise making the demand that the public accounts should be submitted to its members with other absurdities." What

was so absurd about it might be difficult to explain in the light of later events. In any case, the attitude of the grand jury would seem to have foreshadowed the rise of popular or representative government. Portions of the *Presentments* might fairly call for rebuke but by no means all. Was there reason for a refusal, say, to have public accounts submitted to an impartial audit? Or for denying that ordinances should be sanctioned by those upon whom they were imposed? We admit the principle now, but it was a lively point of contention then. The British government, however, was ready, even eager it would seem, to grant to others what they denied to their own. without apparently pausing to consider what it meant *mettre le feu aux poudres*. As with Kingsford so with A. G. Bradley in his monograph on Lord Dorchester (Makers of Canada series: 1907, p. 14 *et seq.*) "This piece of presumption on the part of the quarter sessions," and his tone is scornful as he proceeds to the attack, "in hectoring and reprimanding the king's governor and council, accompanied by pretensions to represent the colony, took away the breath of the presiding judges who snubbed them roundly on every point." And why not since the judiciary was under fire? "As for Murray he was justly enraged at this irregular attack on his administration. He sent home despatches giving the names of the signatories (there were twenty-one altogether, of whom fourteen were English and seven French) who represented, he declared, about two hundred of their race and faith in Quebec and Montreal, who aspired to absolute dominion over eighty thousand of the King's new subjects." Moreover, so it was asserted, six French Canadian grand jurors who understood no English had been fraudulently induced to join in the presentment and now petitioned the king stating in what manner they had been deceived. "The result of all this," triumphantly concludes Mr. Bradley, "was a royal reprimand to these intolerant busybodies and a further announcement of His Majesty's intentions to see complete justice done in every way to his new French subjects."

All relevant no doubt, but spiced with more heat than reason. Nor is the usually sensible William Wood less outspoken. He refers to it with contempt and condemns it without reserve. Some notion of the strength of his feeling may be gained by consulting the passage in his life of Carleton (Chronicles of Canada: 1916) wherein he stigmatizes the *Presentments* as the "pretensions of camp-followers," the moving spirits of "aspirants to membership in the strictly exclusive rumpish little parliament of their own seeking;" and much more in a vein of pure invective. But since this essay presumes to deal with the format of the book rather than content, we may well leave this aspect of the matter to the historians to debate. That all historians did not think alike on the subject is deducible from the observations, moderate in tone and restrained in manner, of Victor Coffin (*The province of Quebec and the early American revolution*; 1896, 311 *et seq.*) "It is noteworthy that this condemnation was later abundantly justified by the complaints as to the ill-working of this provision [covering the judiciary] and the revoking of it in the ordinance of 1770."

Of far greater interest at the moment is the question of



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a Bright, Happy and
Prosperous New Year

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is here

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wishes from

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why, when the *Presentments* which *poussait une haute clameur* among the people and their governors, more than one copy was not preserved to enlighten a curious posterity? And how did it happen that William Brown, who printed the book, and his partner, Thomas Gilmore, who assisted him when sober, were able to dodge the lightning of official displeasure which so often visited the offending printer of the period? The long and tortuous life of Fleury Mesplet in Montreal is a familiar example. There were others in Upper Canada, to name but two: Bartemas Ferguson at Niagara and Francis Collins in York (Toronto) They like Ajax defied the lightning and were struck; though in giving vent to views at variance with conventional opinion, no early journalist excelled William Lyon Mackenzie in self-imposed martyrdom. It is rather late in the season however to pose such questions; much too late to expect satisfactory answers. But the problem which really challenges solution is: To what extent, if any, did the publication of the *Presentments* advance the movement in Canada, as yet in a state of ferment and without direction, toward responsible government? That question, it seems, is really the most vital as well as the most baffling of all, but upon the answer depends the significance or the lack of it of the *Presentments* as a germinant influence politically. Typographically, the book may be taken as fairly representative of the work which issued from the printing-house of Brown and Gilmore in Mountain Street, and probably that is all that need concern us now. Though in remembering the one we

should not forget the other: that from the press of Brown and Gilmore and their successors the Neilsons went forth printers of the highest competence this country has ever known.

Extracted from Printing v 23"7, Dec 1;

Adopt Budget of \$150,000

ONE of the most important items of business passed by a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lithographic Technical Foundation held on October 23rd at the Book-Cadillac Hotel in Detroit, was the adoption of a tentative budget for 1948, similar to the one for 1947, of approximately \$150,000, as recommended by the Executive Committee, of which Mr. Don H. Black is Chairman. The intent was expressed, however, of definitely planning and endeavoring to bring the annual income up to \$175,000 so that the budget could be increased, particularly the appropriation for research, and thus more nearly fill the needs of the industry for cooperative research and education.

★ ★ ★

New Industrial Book Issued by Dominion Rubber Company

A HANDBOOK on "Dominion Conveyor and Elevator Belting" has recently been published by Dominion Rubber Company Limited, Mechanical Goods Division, Montreal, illustrating the types of belts manufactured by this company to meet a wide variety of applications throughout industry. Some pages are reproduced on opposite page.

The publication contains detailed engineering data to enable selection of the correct belt for individual installations. Information on belt training, conveyor speeds and related pulley diameters, choice of belt grade, duck, plies and covers, are among the numerous topics included.

The handbook is generously illustrated and, together with its numerous tables and other technical data, will be of direct interest to those concerned with the many applications of belt conveyor systems in industry.

Purpose of the book is to provide belt users, in a convenient and concise form, with all the data needed to make a correct selection of the type, construction and size of belt required for a given installation; to give full information on, and description of the various types and brands of Dominion conveyor and elevator belts; to assist users in solving their conveyor problems.

The handbook was the result of collaborative effort extending over a period of several months on the part of several artists, the printing house (Clen-Mathers Press Limited, Montreal), and the Company's Advertising Department.

Distribution is chiefly through the Company's branch offices and their respective sales groups. Reading notices have been furnished to certain selected technical and industrial publications which will serve to invite enquiries from technical personnel.



A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

To Old Friends and New
a Very Merry Christmas
and a Most
Happy New Year



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